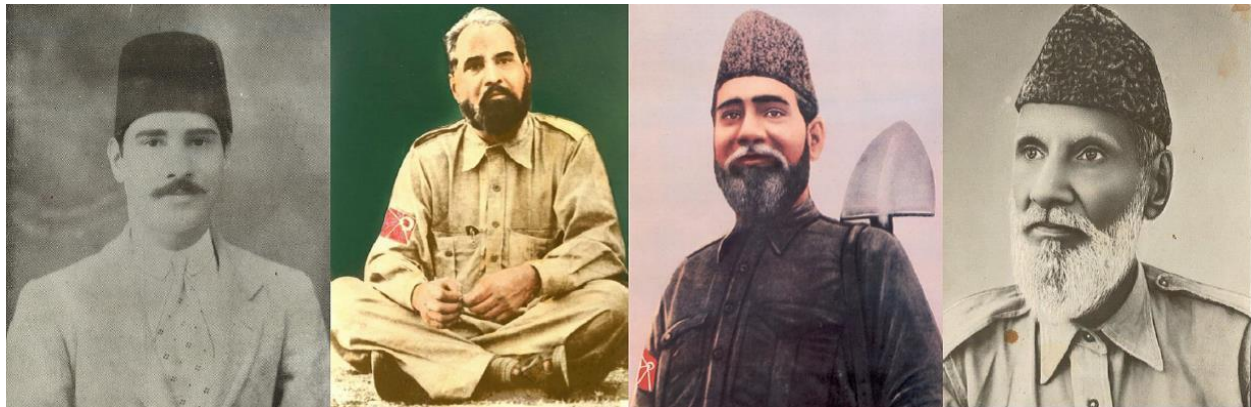


Allama Mashriqi Foretold of the Breakup of Pakistan

By Nasim Yousaf



“Ye Muslims! Today from this platform I sound you a warning. Listen carefully and ponder. In 1970...A panic of widespread bloodshed will sweep the nation. The frenzy of racial and provincial prejudices will grip the whole country...Take it from me that in 1970, Pakistan will be plagued with a grave threat to its sovereignty. You might actually lose it...I warn you about 1970. I warn you to prepare from now to face the situation which will emerge in that year...”

- Allama Mashriqi, 1956

In 1947, the British partitioned India and Pakistan into two wings, East and West Pakistan, which were separated by about 1,400 miles (about 2,200 kilometers). The people of Bengal played a vital role in the creation of Pakistan. However, only about 24 years after Pakistan's creation, the Bengalis in the East Wing fought the War of Independence to obtain a separate homeland for themselves; Bangladesh thus came into being. Allama Mashriqi recognized the poor handling of affairs by the Pakistani Government in East Pakistan from 1947 onwards and foretold of the breakup of Pakistan in 1956.



How did Mashriqi know that a Pakistan divided into two wings would not last? Even prior to independence in 1947, Mashriqi had recognized - and conveyed to Quaid-e-Azam

Mohammad Ali Jinnah (Founder of Pakistan) - that the division of India would be detrimental and that accepting a Pakistan with two completely disconnected parts would make it inherently difficult to maintain unity. And following independence, the Pakistani Government leadership (including Jinnah and his lieutenants) exacerbated this problem through a series of damaging decisions that further alienated the Bengalis in East Pakistan. For example, Dhaka was not made the capital of the country, despite the fact that the Bengalis were greater in number. Key positions in the Government were also given to West Pakistanis. And the country's resources were diverted mainly

to developing West Pakistan. Perhaps the most egregious example was the denial of the Bengalis' demand to recognize Bengali as a national language. On March 21, 1948, while in Dhaka, Jinnah said, "...let me make it very clear to you that the State language of Pakistan is going to be Urdu and no other language..." This declaration led to large protests in East Pakistan, but the Government leadership did not acquiesce to the Bengalis' demand.

Following Jinnah's death, Prime Minister Liaquat Ali Khan continued with the precedent set by his predecessor, Mashriqi and other opposition leaders

were suppressed, while "Quaid-i-Azam's plea for one party in Pakistan" was emphasized (*The Pakistan Times*, April 21, 1948). All of these actions by the leadership led to an increasing rift within the country. On May 28, 1950, a worried and frustrated Mashriqi made a historic address, known as *Khitab-i-Lahore* (Lahore Speech), critiquing the Government and pointing out the grave issues facing the nation:

"The nation should be plainly told that Pakistan is in danger...I consider it of utmost importance that a large population of the Punjabis and Pathans should be transferred to East Pakistan without delay and a large number of Bengalis should be shifted to the Punjab and the NWFP [now Khyber Pakhtunkhwa]...Eastern and Western wings of the country will thus become equally strong..."

Liaquat Ali Khan did not appreciate Mashriqi's advice and instead resented his efforts. Mashriqi, along with his two sons, were arrested, his Khaksar Movement's (Tehrik) offices were sealed, *Al-Islah* newspaper was banned, many followers were arrested, and copies of *Khitab-i-Lahore* were

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OPINION

THE SIKH TIMES

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By Samir Ansari

"Ye Musلمان! Today from this platform I sound you a warning. Listen carefully and ponder. In 1970, a spasm of widespread bloodshed will sweep the nation. The frenzy of racial and provincial prejudices will grip the whole country. Take it from me that in 1970, Pakistan will be plagued with a grave threat to its sovereignty. You might actually lose it. I warn you about 1970, I warn you to prepare from now to face the situation which will emerge in that year..." - Allama Mashriqi, 1946 to 1947, the British partitioned India and Pakistan into two wings, East and West Pakistan, which were separated by about 1,000 miles (about 2,200 kilometers). The people of Bengal played a vital role in the creation of Pakistan. However, only about 24 years after Pakistan's creation, the Bengalis in the East Wing fought the War of Independence to obtain a separate homeland for themselves, Bangladesh. Once came into being, Allama Mashriqi recognized the poor handling of affairs by the Pakistani Government in East Pakistan from 1947 onwards and foretold of the breakup of Pakistan in 1970. How did Mashriqi know that a Pakistan divided into two wings would not last? How prior to independence in 1947, Mashriqi had recognized... and conveyed to Quaid-i-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah (Founder of Pakistan) - that the division of India would be detrimental and that accepting a Pakistan with two completely disconnected parts would make it inherently difficult to maintain unity. And following independence, the Pakistani Government leadership (including Jinnah and his lieutenants) exacerbated this problem through a series of damaging decisions that further alienated the Bengalis in East Pakistan. For example, Dhaka was not made the capital of the country, despite the fact that the Bengalis were greater in number. Key positions in the Government were also given to West Pakistanis. And the country's resources were diverted mainly to developing West Pakistan. Perhaps the most egregious example was the denial of the Bengalis' demand to recognize Bengali as a national language. On March 21, 1948, while in Dhaka, Jinnah said, "...let me make it very clear to you that the State language of Pakistan is going to be Urdu and no other language..." This declaration led to large protests in East Pakistan, but the Government leadership did not acquiesce to the Bengalis' demand. Following Jinnah's death, Prime Minister Liaquat Ali Khan continued with the precedent set by his predecessor, Mashriqi and other opposition leaders were suppressed, while "Quaid-i-Azam's plea for one party in Pakistan" was emphasized (*The Pakistan Times*, April 21, 1948). All of these actions by the leadership led to an increasing rift within the country. On May 28, 1950, a worried and frustrated Mashriqi made a historic address, known as *Khitab-i-Lahore* (Lahore Speech), critiquing the Government and pointing out the grave issues facing the nation:

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country. Zindabad (long live) and muskadeed (death to) will define your era. Thus will be initiated to shatter the country. Take it from me that in 1970, Pakistan will be plagued with a grave threat to its sovereignty. You might actually lose it if the signs of the country were not in the hands of courageous and unyielding leadership. On the governance of the country will fall in the hands of spineless self-lovers or self-centered opportunists. I warn you about 1970, I warn you to prepare from now to face the situation which will emerge in that year."

Following Liaquat Ali's assassination on October 16, 1951, subsequent governments maintained the status quo. The poor governance of the civil government paved the way for army rule and General (later President) Muhammad Ayub Khan took advantage of the situation to impose Martial Law. Despite taking some steps to reform Bengali resentment, Ayub Khan failed to win the Bengali hearts. East Pakistan's resentment against West Pakistan continued to grow. I saw the situation with my own eyes when I visited East Pakistan in 1961. When Ayub Khan's government fell, he handed power to the Army Chief, General (later President) Muhammad Yahya Khan. Under Yahya's Government, elections were held and, in East Pakistan, Sheikh Mujibur Rahman's party (Awami League) received a clear majority in the National Assembly and Provincial Assembly. To prevent Mr. Ghaur Rahman from gaining power, Yahya did not convene a National Assembly session to elect a new Prime Minister. He instead tried to broker a power-sharing arrangement for himself with Zulfikar Ali Bhutto (whose Pakistan Peoples Party came up in second position in the elections). It seemed that both Yahya and Bhutto were willing to risk the breakup of Pakistan to secure power for their selves. Once again, the grievances of the Bengalis were ignored by the leadership. With these types of political maneuvers, relations between East and West Pakistan deteriorated greatly. Yahya didn't seem interested in visiting East Pakistan or understanding the ground realities. Finally, under pressure from the East Wing's Awami Front, Yahya finally arrived in Dhaka on March 25, 1971. During a high-level meeting in Dhaka, Air Commodore Zahir Muneer, Commander of the Pakistan Air Force's East Wing (and also Allama Mashriqi's niece's son), adamantly opposed the use of force against the Bengalis and suggested a political settlement. The more adventurous, real top-level official for Commodore M. Zahir Muneer: A Pioneer of the Pakistan Air Force's. Nevertheless, Yahya ordered military action.

confiscated. In response to these actions, Hussain Shaheed Suhrawardy (who later became Prime Minister) from Bengal criticized Mashriqi's arrest and filed a Habeas Corpus petition in the Lahore High Court. Along with Suhrawardy, the case was represented by Mian Mehmood Ali Kasuri (who later became Law Minister) and Barrister Khawaja Abdul Rahim. Unfortunately, Chief Justice Munir rejected their petition without any solid grounds. With steps such as these, democracy was crushed in the initial years of Pakistan's founding.

Mashriqi remained in jail for 18 months. Meanwhile, the Government of Pakistan took no meaningful action to address the Bengali grievances. The autocratic style of rule led to a collapse of Jinnah's Muslim League in the first provincial elections, which were held in 1954 in East Pakistan. Mashriqi sensed the disunity in the country. As a humanitarian and believer in the unity of people from all races and faiths, he was deeply concerned that the country would be torn apart. Therefore, in a historic speech addressing a large gathering in Minto Park (later Iqbal Park, Lahore) in 1956, Mashriqi issued a wake-up call to those in power as well as the nation:

"Ye Muslims! Today from this platform I sound you a warning. Listen carefully and ponder. Sometime in the future, probably in 1970, you will be confronted with a perilous situation. In 1970 - I see it clearly - the nation will be stormed from all sides. The internal situation would have deteriorated gravely. A panic of widespread bloodshed will sweep the nation. The frenzy of racial and provincial prejudices will grip the whole country. Zindabad [long live] and murdabad [death to] will deafen your ears. Plans will be initiated to dismember the country. Take it from me that in 1970, Pakistan will be plagued with a grave threat to its sovereignty. You might actually lose it if the reigns of the country were not in the hands of courageous and unrelenting leadership... Or, the governance of the country will fall in the hands of spineless self-seekers or self-centred opportunists... I warn you about 1970. I warn you to prepare from now to face the situation which will emerge in that year."

Following Liaquat Ali's assassination on October 16, 1951, subsequent governments maintained the status quo. The poor governance of the civil government paved the way for army rule and General (later President) Mohammad Ayub Khan took advantage of the situation to impose Martial Law. Despite taking some steps to redress Bengali resentment, Ayub Khan failed to win the Bengalis' hearts. East Pakistan's resentment against West Pakistan continued to grow. I saw the situation with my own eyes when I visited East Pakistan in 1969.

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realities. Finally, under pressure from the East Wing's Armed Forces, Yahya finally arrived in Dhaka on March 15, 1971. During a high-level meeting in Dhaka, Air Commodore Zafar Masud, Commander of the Pakistan Air Force's East Wing (and also Allama Mashriqi's niece's son), adamantly opposed the use of force against the Bengalis and suggested a political settlement (for more information, read my book entitled *Air Commodore M. Zafar Masud: A Pioneer of the Pakistan Air Force*). Nevertheless, Yahya ordered military action. This led to the War of Bangladesh Independence. Ultimately, the Pakistan Army surrendered (90,000 soldiers and civilians became prisoners of war) and Bangladesh emerged as a sovereign country on December 16, 1971.

Had the Government listened to Mashriqi's concern for the Bengalis and treated East Pakistan fairly, the country would have remained intact and the West Pakistanis' humiliating surrender, along with the many human atrocities and suffering that accompanied the war, would not have occurred. A selfless and visionary leadership could have kept Pakistan united. The country still awaits this kind of leadership, even today.

Nasim Yousaf (grandson of Allama Mashriqi) has been conducting research on the history of the Indian sub-continent since 1996. These efforts have led him to some of the most prestigious research libraries in the US, U.K., and Canada. He has produced 15 books and 19 digitized files of rare works related to Mashriqi. He has also presented papers at American academic conferences and his articles have been published in peer-reviewed journals, namely Harvard Asia Quarterly, Pakistaniaat, World History Encyclopedia, and teaching journal Education About Asia.

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